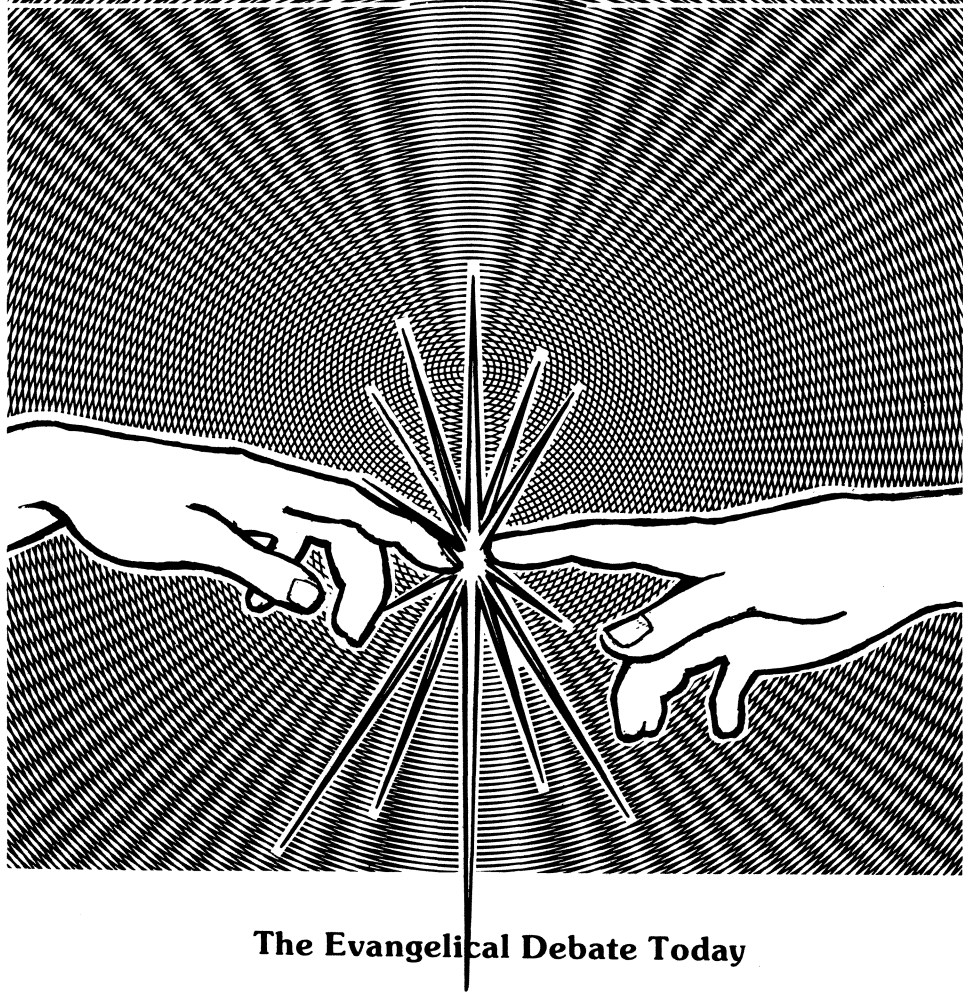


CREATION by EVOLUTION?



The Evangelical Debate Today

CREATION BY EVOLUTION?

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A
Symposium
Edited by
David C. Watts

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Introduction

The question of origins is both important and emotive. This publication is addressed primarily to the Christian community in the 1980's as a contribution to the debate over creation and evolution. In particular we seek to challenge the widespread assumption that 'macro-evolution' is God's method of creation. Our approach herein is at the Biblico-theological level, though with some attention to logical factors and historical perspectives. Elsewhere many of the contributors have written on the scientific aspects of the controversy. It is our conviction that our case must rest ultimately on Biblical authority. This entails responsible handling of the Scriptures; indeed our exegesis and interpretation must be in accord with sound 'scientific' principles of Christian scholarship if it is to convince.

We write as individuals in broad agreement on the major issues. This does not mean, of course, that we have a monolithic answer to every question. Our minds are, we trust, open to discussion and further reflection on many aspects both of substance and of detail. A major area of discussion is the age of the earth, but this does not feature prominently in the present volume.

Debate on 'origins' often flounders through imprecise definition of key terms. Particularly this is so with evolution — a most slippery word! Basic to our approach is the distinction between micro-evolution and macro-evolution. We do not dispute the undoubted evidence for the former. When the word 'evolution' occurs in the pages without further qualification it denotes macro-evolution. This, we believe, lacks compelling scientific support and runs counter to the message of Scripture.

David Watts

WHAT'S WRONG WITH "THEISTIC EVOLUTION"?

Gordon J. Keddie

Can Christians believe both evolution¹ and the Bible? One suspects that an overwhelming majority of people — whether Christian or non-Christian — would respond with a resounding “No!” There is something obvious about the conflict between the Genesis creation and the general theory of evolution. Even among those who accept that the Bible teaches abiding truths of some kind, there is an assumption that the evolutionary explanation is satisfactory and that Genesis is a myth with no relevance for the scientific view of origins.

Among those who do believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God this question is very much alive. For at least a generation, British evangelical Christian thought has been dominated by the view that the Bible and evolution are not in conflict but represent complementary perspectives on the development of our world. This has been called “theistic evolution” by those who oppose it, because it involves the acceptance of the general theory of evolution and an interpretation of Genesis which removes apparent contradictions. The whole point of this position is not to promote “evolutionism” but to affirm the truth that God created all things. In essence, it is a creationist philosophy which has absorbed and accommodated an evolutionary science, while rejecting the philosophical and religious underpinnings of that science. The fundamental question is: *Is Biblical creation complementary to evolutionary science? Is complementarism* — as “theistic evolution” might more accurately be called — the clear teaching of the Word of God which we all, as evangelical believers, receive as inspired, infallible and inerrant?² To answer this question is the purpose of this paper.

1. The Fundamental Idea of “Theistic Evolution.”

The most basic notion is that evolution and the Bible are not really in conflict with one another. Indeed, the prevailing view is that evolution is a *method* of creation — a method, *not the* method, for it is allowed that there was an initial creation of matter, *ex nihilo*, and probably some later creative interventions into evolutionary history. Since evolutionary process is regarded as a kind of creation, or at least is undergirded by creative power, the distinction has been made between “special creation” and “divine creation through natural processes.”³ It is acknowledged that the Genesis account *appears* to be quite different from the evolutionary explanation of origins. But behind this, it is claimed, the *real* meaning of the Bible allows for the acceptance of evolution. The two are said to be complementary. This has been developed in terms of a theistic evolutionary synthesis, known as the Complementarity Model, by Professor Donald M. Mackay of Keele University, unquestionably the leading theoretician of evangelical complementarism.⁴ (Figure 1) Mackay is very

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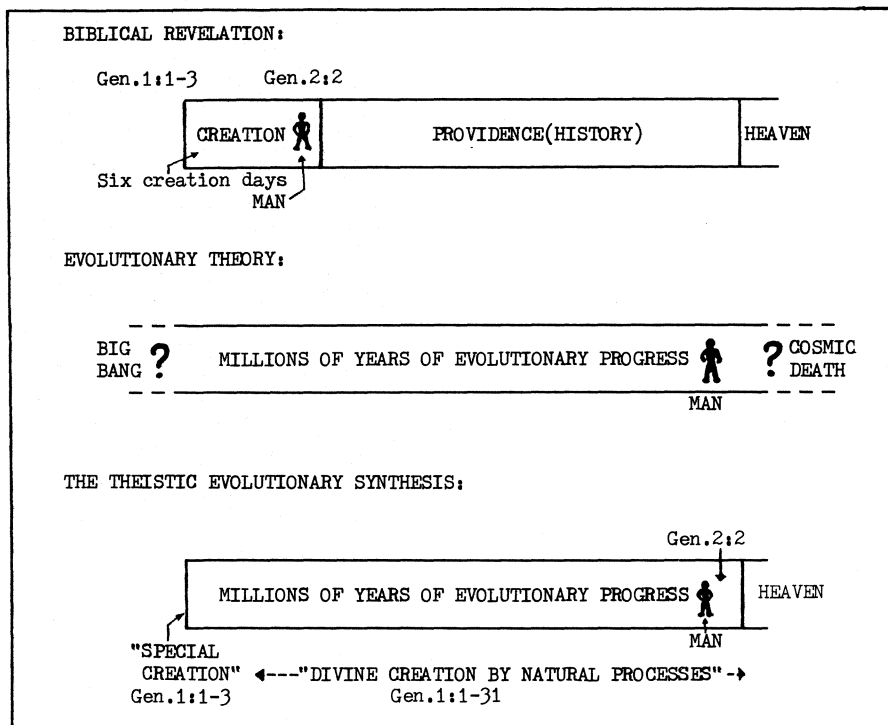


FIGURE 1. THE THEISTIC EVOLUTIONARY SYNTHESIS

cautious on the relationship of the Genesis text to the evolutionary scheme and suggests the propriety of a "reverent agnosticism" which involves the juxtaposition of an acceptance of evolution as a working model of the scientific perception of reality with an understanding of Genesis that removes the details of the record from the realm of the historical and scientific. Genesis teaches truths which complement the findings of empirical science, although there is no concrete historical contact between text and science. God's power is seen as "holding in being" all created reality in that God upholds the process of evolution.⁵

Some are less rigorous than Mackay in pressing the non-historical nature of the details in Genesis and find some elements in the text requiring historical interpretation. Some insist on a literal Adam and Eve, whose advent coincides with the evolution of man from hominid precursors.⁶

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2. Evolution and the Bible in Theistic Evolution

2:1 *Evolution is accepted as a fact.*

Even where the word “model” is used, rather than “fact”, the assumption is that current evolutionary thought — the neo-Darwinian synthesis — is a thoroughly acceptable position. That is not to say that no-one has doubts about aspects — or even all — of the general theory of evolution. A leading American complementarist (if we may so denominate evangelical Christians of this school of thought), Dr. R.H. Bube, has written that,

“As a scientific description, evolutionary theory as we know it today may well prove inadequate to describe the development of life forms on earth.”⁷

His doubts are set, however, in a context by his conviction that no scientifically defensible position on origins can be taken “except one consistent with the broad outlines of evolution,”⁸ and he certainly does not expect evolution to be refuted in the near future.⁹ The British complementarist, Prof. R.J. Berry is, if anything, more convinced than Bube of the irrefutability of evolution. In his 1975 work, *Adam and the ape — A Christian approach to the theory of evolution*, he asserts that the mechanism of evolution is “a fact with no more uncertainty than the law that an incoming tide washes away sand-castles.”¹⁰ In expounding the Complementarity Model he insists that Genesis be so interpreted as to require no more than the special creation of “matter, animal life and man” during the course of evolutionary history.¹¹ In 1982, in the authoritative “Studies in Biology” series, the same author has contributed a volume on “Neo-Darwinism.”¹² This is a clear and vigorous defence of the neo-Darwinian synthesis. He devotes a section to the errors of Creationism but, interestingly enough, makes no mention of his own convictions about Christian teaching on creation.¹³

The basic conviction operative here is that evolution is to be received as orthodoxy. Sir Gavin de Beer once said that “no competent person has any doubt about the evolution of man.”¹⁴ This view is shared by complementarists who believe it “intellectually irresponsible” to deny the validity of evolution.¹⁵

2:2 *Genesis is re-interpreted as non-historical with respect to creation.*

In practice, attempts to show that evolution and Scripture are complementary have meant the re-interpretation of the latter to fit the former. Genesis does not present us with an historical account with implications for any scientific description of origins, but with a religious perspective on reality. Professor D.M. Mackay puts it this way,

“... the Genesis narrative resembles an account of the way in which an artist brings his scene into being: it leaves entirely open the field of investigation we call ‘cosmological origins,’ which must be determined by empirical examination of the scene — God’s universe as created.”¹⁶

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Genesis offers "a disguised version of the past which the scientist can discover."¹⁷ Mackay, unlike most other — less consistent, we believe — complementarists, will not be drawn into attempts to harmonise any of the data of Genesis 1-3 with evolutionary science. He will not explain the creation days, for example, in terms of ages of geological time. These are to be dealt with on an entirely different plane. They are said to be *complementary* precisely on the ground that there is no concrete one-to-one correspondence between text and phenomena, in historical terms. Whatever details in Genesis may appear to have scientific implications (in conflict with the evolutionary view) are vapourised into an ineffable picture of metaphysical origins. The Genesis account is to be seen, as one American put it, as "a vehicle through which shine basic truths about God, man and the world."¹⁸

This is not the whole story. This "complementary" relationship between evolution and a non-historical Genesis creation has a vagueness that makes it difficult even for its most rigorous proponents to avoid some concessions to historicity. All affirm creation *ex nihilo* (the beginning of the history of reality) as revealed in Scripture. The verse in question (Gen. 1:1) has no obvious scientific difficulties and is simply a grand statement that God created this world. Many complementarists allow, however, that there was a literal Adam.¹⁹ Even in this case, the text is evacuated of as much of its obvious historical content as possible. God may have intervened in evolution to create Adam, but he is not made from real dust — he arises by the implanting of a human soul in the (evolved) body of a superior hominid.²⁰ Genesis is a metaphor — but sometimes it has an historical reference.

2:3 Spiritual truth is separated from historical fact.

There is clearly a kind of dualism operating in this kind of approach. Two admittedly contradictory accounts are "reconciled" by confining each of them to mutually exclusive spheres of reference. Science is concerned with the phenomena of created reality, while Scripture is "elevated" to a spiritual realm where it need not touch directly and normatively the phenomena of our universe. There is a separation of "spiritual truth from historical fact."²¹

For those who have long since rejected the doctrine of an inspired, infallible and inerrant Scripture, this is no problem. If the Bible is myth or merely a human record of what men thought God had said and done, then there is indeed no reason and no ground for opposition to conventional human wisdom. But the evangelical believer who knows the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God Incarnate, as his own Saviour and believes that the inerrant Word of God reveals what Dr. Francis Schaeffer very quaintly calls "true truth," does have a problem with the dehistoricisation of foundational passages that are so obviously historical in nature. This tension — the "pull" of the historical implications of the text against the evolutionary paradigm he accepts as a scientist — sheds light on the inconsistencies in the complementarist

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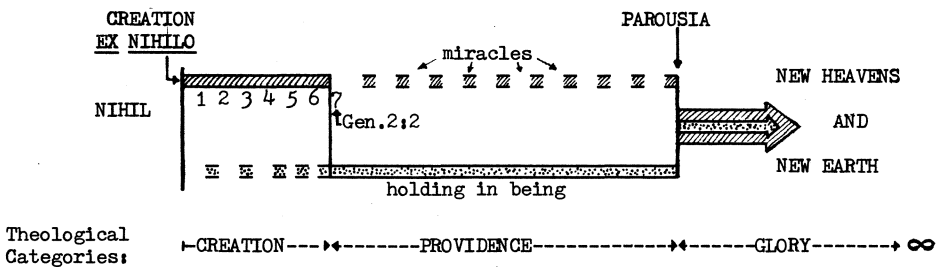
approach. The historicity of Adam is still retained by most.²² Pearce goes as far as to suggest that Adam was a Neolithic farmer, whose hominid body had evolved over earlier millennia.²³ This, we would suggest, is not merely a novel theory. It is an expression of the tension for the Christian mind that arises from the necessity of reconciling a Bible that is received as God's Word with evolutionary science that flies in its face — against the background of a presupposition that the latter is proven fact.

THE BIBLE AND THEISTIC EVOLUTION

The question posed by complementarism is essentially biblical and theological and only secondarily scientific. One could, of course, approach the question from the latter direction and seek to show that it is not only not “intellectual irresponsibility” to question evolution's claim to factual incontrovertibility, but it is thoroughly sound thinking to hold that the general theory of evolution is wrong. This is the long-term goal of creationist scientists. The complementarists, however, offer no critique of evolutionary process.²⁴ Their critique has, as its principal thrust, the argument that the Bible, rightly understood, does not contradict current evolutionary explanations of origins and pre-history. This biblical and theological focus must provide the core and basis of our dialogue with complementarism. What evidence does Scripture itself afford to shed light on this question?

1. Creation and Providence.

Theistic evolution recognises that the Bible seems to teach that God created the world in a brief period of uniquely creative activity (Gen. 1:1-31) and that He definitively completed this work of *creation* (Gen. 2:1,2). From that point on, in what we call God's *providence*, He upholds this completed creation by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). (Figure 2).



The Complementarity Model, in effect, merges these two categories of divine activity. The work of the six creation days is applied to the whole course of evolutionary process, culminating in the advent of man. Providence, which according to Scripture is the divine upholding of a completed mature

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creation, has been redefined as "divine creation by natural processes," viz., evolution.

1.1 An *exegetical* basis for the complementarist viewpoint has been proposed by Spanner²⁵ and Berry.²⁶ It is argued that the Hebrew *bara* (to create) is used in Genesis for creation *out of nothing*, whereas *asah* (to make) refers to creation out of material that was already created. *Bara* occurs in Gen. 1:1 (of heaven and earth), 1:21 (of animal life) and in 1:27 and 2:3,4 (of man). These, Berry suggests, are special creations; the rest — the *asah* "creations" — can refer to the natural development of new forms, i.e., evolution as a method of creation. Most of the "creation" in Genesis is process, i.e., providence as known as evolution.

The problem with this is that Biblical usage does not support such a categorical distinction between these words. They are interchangeable and capable of a wide range of usages. For example, *bara* is used in Isaiah 54:16 of the blacksmith, but it is not special creation that is in view. On the other hand, *asah* occurs in Nehemiah 9:6 which unmistakably refers to creation out of nothing.

"You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them."

Between them these words occur hundreds of times in the Old Testament and the specific meaning is determined in context and not by simplistic categorisations such as the complementarists have proposed.²⁷

1.2 Why, then, the distinction between *creation* and *providence*? Three points in particular suggest themselves;

a. The text itself stresses the completion of creation with the establishment of the present time-order. Genesis 2:2 stands as a mighty watershed in the work of God.

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating he had done."

It is undoubtedly true that God's upholding of providence (process) is a divine work (John 5:17). This can involve creative power (Ps.104:30). Miracles are examples of God's mighty acts in the course of history. But these divine activities cannot be identified as *de novo* creation. The creation of the "six days" cannot be vapourised into geological time and evolutionary process without violence to the text of Scripture.

b. The distinction between the Creator and the creature is clearly set forth in the Genesis account. The plain meaning of Genesis 2:2 reveals a Creator God

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who steps back, as it were, from what He has made and, in doing so, shows that he cannot be identified with process or the stuff that He has made. Thus the distinction between creation and providence keeps us from a pantheism in which the Creator is identified with the creature.²⁸

c. This in turn provides the basis for man's responsibility before God. As a creature distinct from his Creator, man cannot identify himself as part of some divine creative "process." Man is not a piece of God or a part of creative act. Man is a creature, utterly *dependant* upon a God who is, as to essence, wholly distinct but who upholds His creation by His immanent power (Heb. 1:3). Furthermore, we see that God cannot be charged with responsibility for man's sin, for he is distinct from creature-hood.²⁹

2. The six Creation-days.

Theistic evolution admits that Genesis appears to teach a six day Creation which included the appearance of the various elements of created reality in a particular order. It is recognised that neither the brevity nor the order of this creation can accommodate evolutionary theories. Genesis is therefore to be regarded as metaphorical. Most complementarists warn against a literal interpretation, reminding us that "thought models based upon everyday experience" can be "inconsistent and misleading."³⁰

2.1 It is surely legitimate to ask, at the outset, why God did use a word — "day" — when it would inevitably mesh in men's minds with a "thought model" based on everyday experience that, in turn, would mislead them into believing that God actually did create the world in six days? Hebrew has a word for "age" — *olam*. The old Testament also has genuinely poetical accounts of Creation, namely Job 38 and Psalm 104. But God nowhere in Scripture indicates that Creation took ages. And nowhere in Scripture is there evidence that the Genesis account was to be regarded as a metaphor of a reality forever obscure to God's Word but exclusively and authoritatively intelligible to human science. An inerrant Word of God demands, surely, the assumption that word and meaning correspond — i.e., that a "day" is a day and not something else.

2.2 The days of Genesis are real days. The word *yôm* does not admit of an expansion into aeons.³¹ They are, however, real *creation* days and they probably were considerably different from our normal 24-hour days. Creation is, to us, inevitably an amazing and incomprehensible outpouring of God's power. In principle and in practice creative acts are impenetrable to scientific investigation.

It is therefore a requirement of textual accuracy and a recognition of the true mystery of Creation, that we resist the temptation to call the days "24 hour days," rather than creation days. They were days. God's Word says so. They were not ages of geological time. No evolutionary transformations took place

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in them. They were real days and we can understand them as such. But they were unique and God has not exhaustively described them to us, although what he has revealed to us is historical and sufficient for our needs.³²

The Bible cannot be interpreted as the Complementarity Model requires without compromising the integrity of the text as God's inerrant Word.

3. **Man, sin and death.**

There is no question that the New Testament "makes the first Adam as literal as the last."³³ In the Complementarity Model this is allowed for in a highly modified way. The account of Adam's creation and fall into sin may be seen as a translation rather than a transcription of the facts.³⁴ Thus the literal Adam of the complementarists is an evolved hominid ("dust" — Gen.2:7) with a soul or spirit implanted to make him in the image of God. Eve is likewise an evolved hominid ("one of the man's ribs" — Gen. 2:21). The fall of man into sin was, indeed, spiritual rebellion against God, but the death in which this issued was spiritual death, since physical death had been in the world throughout evolutionary time. "The death that came by Adam and was conquered by Christ," writes one complementarist, "must mean spiritual death, since physical death continues even for devout Christians (I Corinthians 15:30), and Adam himself lived for many years after being expelled from the Garden of Eden."³⁵

Again, the question is: Can this interpretation be sustained from the Word of God?

3.1 The complementarist view of the image of God in man is of necessity that it is purely spiritual. Man's body, having evolved from a hominid ancestor, cannot in any sense be said to partake of that image.³⁶ But is this so? "Is it," asks Professor John Murray, "only in respect of his being spirit that man is made in the image of God?" He answers;

"It would be easy to say so. God has no body. But it is man in his unity and integrity who is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7; 9:6). Man is body, and it is not possible to exclude man in this identity from the scope of that which defines his identity, the image of God."³⁷

It is "of man in his integrity" that God's image is predicated.³⁸ And it is the whole man — body and soul — who is raised in incorruption (I Corinthians 15:42). This is what redemption means — the renewal of the whole man.

3.2 Scripture teaches that Eve was created after Adam and it is clear that the Apostle Paul in I Timothy 2:11-14 is establishing the role-relations of men and women on the basis of the historicity of the Creation account. D.A. Carson has shown that Paul's argument could have no force if it is only an illustration "drawn from mythological sources."³⁹ Only in an historical reality does his doctrine have a sound basis.

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3.3 The Bible's teaching about the Fall, sin and death provides perhaps the greatest difficulty for the complementarist approach. When God finished His work of Creation, He declared it to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Yet at this point in the Complementarity Model, the world has seen some 4.5 billion years of evolution involving the extinction of some 90% of the species of living things that had ever lived. Furthermore, the hominids into which God had breathed His image, thus making them truly human, had been experiencing toil, pain in childbirth and death for hundreds of thousands of years. These last points are not quibbles. Trouble in childbirth (Gen. 3:16) and labour (Gen. 3:19) are results of the historical fall into sin. And the New Testament is clear that death itself is an effect of the Fall. Complementarism is compelled to restrict the death that came by Adam to "spiritual death". But Paul is clear in Romans 5:12ff and I Corinthians 15:21-58 that it is *both* physical and spiritual death that are in view. We certainly will die physically, however godly we are, but Christ has conquered death, the "last enemy" (I Corinthians 15:26) and that is why we will rise from the dead and our bodies will be glorified.

CONCLUSION

There is no complementarity or harmony between the teaching of God's Word and current evolutionary science on the question of origins. Complementarism depends upon an unwarranted dehistoricisation of the Genesis account which in turn has serious and deleterious effects on the way in which doctrines integral to the whole Bible are formulated and applied. These touch upon the nature of redemption itself.

The Word of God challenges the believer to "Let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4) and this must involve the comprehensive application of God's Word to all human endeavour — and against the background of a world in rebellion against God. In science, as in every aspect of human experience, God's Word has normative significance and application. The challenge — indeed, the command from God — is to "walk by faith" and in dependence upon God to affirm the truth of His Word. The fundamental issue is the authority of the Bible as the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God. There is no middle ground between this Word and the claims of evolutionary thought.

Notes

1. Throughout this discussion, the word "evolution" has reference to *macro-evolution* or the *general theory of evolution*, i.e., the view that all major groupings of living organisms arose from a single source by natural processes, whether random or "selective". It is not disputed that there is a category of adaptive radiation, or *micro-evolution*, which has been observed to result in new varieties within existing species and even entirely new species.
2. Creationists believe that the Bible and a true science subject to the control of basic biblical principle and the norms of historico-grammatical exegesis are fully complementary in providing a picture of created reality. There is no conflict between Scripture, rightly

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- understood, and science, rightly applied. The point at issue here is whether the complementarity proposed by theistic evolution (complementarism) does justice to Scripture, true science or both. The thesis of this paper is that it does none of these, because it proposes a complementarism involving an erroneous accommodation of Scripture to the unwarranted speculations of a naturalistic science.
3. R.J. Berry (1975) *Adam and the ape*. Falcon, London, p. 37.
 4. D.M. Mackay (1953) "Looking for Connections" in *Where Science and Faith Meet*. I.V.F., London, pp. 14-20.
(1960) *Science and Christian Faith Today*. London, Falcon.
(1965) "Man as a Mechanism" in *Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe*, London, I.V.F., pp 51-69.
(1974) *The Clockwork Image*. London IVP.
 5. D.M. Mackay (1974) *The Clockwork Image*. London, IVP, p. 58.
 6. E.K.V. Pearce (1969) *Who was Adam?* Exeter, Paternoster.
 7. R.H. Bube (1980) "Creation (B) Understanding Creation and Evolution," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 32, 3, p. 175.
 8. R.H. Bube (1968) "Biblical Revelation" in *The Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Ed. R.H. Bube) Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p. 106.
 9. R.H. Bube (1980) *J.A.S.A.*, 32, 3, p. 175.
 10. R.J. Berry (1975) p. 15.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
 12. R.J. Berry (1982) *Neo-Darwinism*. London, Edward Arnold.
 13. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61. This parallels the publication in the 1960's by the evangelical F.H.T. Rhodes of a purely secular work, *The Evolution of Life* (Pelican, 1962), and a Christian (complementarist) essay, "Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe" in the Symposium of the same name edited by D.M. Mackay (IVF, 1965).
 14. G. de Beer (1964) *Charles Darwin*. New York, Doubleday, p. 225.
 15. R.J. Berry (1975) p. 70.
 16. D.M. Mackay (1960) p. 13.
 17. *idem.*
 18. Gingerich (1968) "Geology" in R.H. Bube (Ed.) (1968) *The Encounter between Christianity and Science*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p. 168.
 19. Pearce (1969) p. 92; Berry (1975) p. 50.
 20. Berry (1975) p. 61.
 21. R. Acworth (1970) *Creation, Evolution and Christian Faith*. London Evangelical Press, p. 10.
 22. Though not all. Cf. O. Gingerich (1968) p. 168. "Adam is representative of all men. The fall represents universal sin and imperfection in humanity."
 23. Pearce (1969) is devoted to expounding this theory.
 24. They do critique evolutionary philosophy while often defending evolutionistic science. Cf. Rhodes (1962) and Berry (1982).
 25. D.C. Spanner (1965) *Creation and Evolution*. London, Falcon, p. 40.
 26. Berry (1975) p. 37.
 27. J.G. McConville (1978) Review of "Creation and Flood" by Davis A. Young, *Biblical Creation*, 1, pp. 28-30.
 28. H. Bavinck (1956) *Our Reasonable Faith*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans (trans from Dutch) p. 180.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
 30. Spanner (1965) p. 35.
 31. J.G. McConville (1979) "Yom — Day", *Biblical Creation*, 3, pp. 85-86.
 32. Hesitancy to define the exact length of the days is not to be construed as an attempt to infiltrate extra time for the age of the earth into the creation account. For further study of this issue, see McCone, "Genesis Time — a spiritual consideration," in D.W. Patten (1970) *Symposium on Creation II*. Grand Rapids, Baker, and P. Zimmerman (1968) "Can we accept Theistic Evolution?" in H.M. Morris, *Symposium on Creation I*. Grand Rapids, Baker.

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33. Berry (1975) p. 50.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
35. *Idem.*
36. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
37. J. Murray (1977) "Man in the Image of God," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 2 Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, p. 39.
38. *Idem.*
39. D.A. Carson (1980) "Adam in the Epistles of Paul," in N.M. de S. Cameron (Ed.) *In the Beginning . . .* Glasgow, Biblical Creation Society, p. 38.

THE DEATH OF ADAM

David Watts

All members of the human race must face the prospect of death and its consideration raised a complex set of questions. Firstly, our attitudes to death are profoundly affected by our beliefs as to the nature and purpose of human existence and to what, if anything, will follow our decease. Furthermore, our views on human destiny are strongly influenced by our beliefs about human origins. How did men and women come to be? Surely in this question lies the key to the problem of why intrinsically men and women die? Two opposing views are generally held on this subject. Many people today regard death, however unwelcome it may be, as nevertheless entirely 'natural' to humanity. Their opinion is largely derived from an exclusively biological view of man's nature. On the other hand, there are people who are influenced by other considerations — of man's higher powers and aspirations, for example, who regard death as somehow fundamentally unnatural and therefore thoroughly abhorrent.

The stance of historic biblical Christianity is that human death is indeed fundamentally unnatural. Biblical faith is centred upon 'the death of death in the death of Christ', and in his bodily resurrection from the dead, with the resultant consequences for those who belong to Christ. Discussion of biblical teaching on the subject of death, however, requires an early recognition of the semantic range of meaning which the word has in Scripture. In Biblical theology 'death' denotes both physical death and spiritual death. But what precisely is meant by this distinction? On this question we now focus our attention.

The diversity and unity of 'death'

In the Old Testament, references to death basically denote physical dissolution of the body.¹ In *Genesis* 5, for example, we encounter the sombre refrain: 'and then he died'. Thus *physical death*² is the *event* of bodily dissolution followed by the ensuing *state*. But in the New Testament the concept of death is more explicitly comprehensive. Additional to NT references to physical death, the present spiritual condition of mankind in alienation from God is also described as a state of death. Thus Paul affirms that: 'the mind of sinful man is death' (*Rom.* 8:6). And he says of the pre-Christian state of the believers at Ephesus: 'As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live, when you followed the ways of this world . . . ' (*Eph.* 2:1f).³ *Spiritual death* then is the opposite of spiritual life. It is a state resulting from a broken relationship with God. There is a related term: *eternal death* or 'the second death' — as it occurs in the book of

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Revelation (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).⁴ This denotes the ultimate and permanent state of spiritual death experienced by the finally impenitent following the last judgment, (cf *Hebrews* 9:27). The question of a relationship between these different modes of death, and therefore an underlying *unity* of human death arises in connection with the origin of death. Meanwhile we note that any given NT textual reference to ‘death’ may refer either distinctly to spiritual or physical death or sometimes may embrace both of these aspects.⁵ The immediate or wider context of a given reference will invariably indicate the semantic range intended by the author at that point. When death is to be denoted in its unity and comprehensiveness, we may use the expression ‘*total death*’.⁶ The converse is ‘*total life*’.

Death’s *primaeval* entry

Despite the distinction between physical and spiritual death, Biblical theology traces the initial entry of these evils into human experience to a single source. According to Scripture, ‘death’ has entered the human race as a consequence of sinful disobedience to an explicit divine command on the part of the first human pair. Death is the judicial consequence of man’s disobedience originating with this *primaeval* fall into sin by Adam and Eve. Original sin therefore is the source of original death. It is thus of considerable importance for Christian belief to establish the precise scope of this ‘death’ which entered the human race through the Adamic space-time fall. Was this only spiritual death? or physical death? or total death? Some interpreters of the relevant biblical texts have sought to ‘play down’ the more objective, tangible effects of the fall by limiting the reference to spiritual death alone. However, the natural interpretation of these passages points to both spiritual *and* physical death as consequences of the fall. It follows that *human* death, in every sense, was not intrinsic to God’s original creation of mankind and is therefore radically unnatural. This has profound consequences for our views of man’s origin and destiny and the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. But before these implications are discussed the key texts on which our conclusions are to be based must be carefully examined.

Death in Early Genesis

‘Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’

Genesis 2:17 (RSV)

‘In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’

Genesis 3:19 (RSV)

These verses from *Genesis* 2 and 3 are the source of the Biblical association of sin and death. To begin with, it is appropriate to interpret these statements from within their immediate context in *Genesis*. Subsequently the relevant NT texts will be examined.

Genesis 2:17 records the threat of death as the judicial consequence that should follow disobedience of the specific divine command concerning the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’. What precisely was threatened? Let us attempt to establish this initially from the verse itself before referring to the carrying out of the threat in chapter 3 — for we must reckon with the real possibility of some reduction in the severity of the judgment in the actual execution of the sentence. Firstly there is the question of the time at which the threatening would be discharged. The phrase ‘in the day’ (*bēyôm*) does not signify specifically a day of twelve or twenty-four hours. As with the occurrence of the expression in v4 of the same chapter, the meaning is — ‘at the time when’.⁷ This is established from numerous instances in the OT. Furthermore the crucial statement ‘you shall (surely) die’ may be taken to indicate that the full content of that which is denoted by ‘die’ would immediately and certainly be visited upon the transgressors. However Speiser⁸ notes that this verb-phrase has an infinite absolute construction and translates ‘you shall be doomed to death’. Appealing to the wider context, he notes: “the point of the whole narrative is apparently man’s ultimate punishment rather than instantaneous death”. A distinction between the giving of a death sentence and the subsequent execution of that sentence does appear to be justified in the judicial context of *Genesis* 2 and 3. Consequently the death threat of v 17 may involve either immediate or delayed execution of the sentence.

When we recall the multiple aspects of ‘death’ in scripture as a whole it also becomes possible to envisage execution of the death sentence in more than one stage. What is clear then from *Genesis* 2:17 is the link established between the sin of the first human pair and the resultant sentence of death. But the detailed nature of ‘death’ and the time-scale of its infliction upon Adam and his descendants must be established from the actual outworking of events as narrated in *Genesis* 3ff and elsewhere in scripture. All modes of death which scripture regards as consequences of human sin may thus be seen primarily as the result of the death sentence of *Genesis* 2:17.

In the third chapter of *Genesis* the threat of death, upon eating from the forbidden tree, is re-echoed in Eve’s reply to the serpent’s question (v3). The same day that Adam and Eve disobey and eat, the Lord God comes to them, calls to the man and having pronounced a solemn curse on the serpent he further addresses the guilty pair (v16-19). These words are set in a context of both grace and judgment, for promise of deliverance is contained in the prophetic reference to the woman’s seed (v15). Nevertheless v19 plainly

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spells out that now physical (bodily) death will inevitably overtake the man. His work will become arduous and finally man the labourer will lose the battle with the recalcitrant ground. His body will return to the element from whence he was taken, (cf 2:7).⁹ The outworking of this is related in the fifth chapter. After his allotted life-span, 'Adam died' (5:5). Meanwhile *Genesis* 3 relates the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden and specifically from access to the 'tree of life' (v22ff). Man is now fully mortal. Physical death is clearly set forth as a judicial consequence of sin, the outworking — albeit delayed — of the divine threatening. This does not however exclude the reality of spiritual death as an associated result of sin. Although the doctrine of spiritual death lacks full and precise elaboration in *Genesis*, its characteristic features may be recognised. There is the obvious rupture in the fellowship of Adam and Eve with their Maker. They are thrust forth into exile from the Garden and their hope of full reconciliation can only rest in the grace of God and his veiled promise of a Deliverer. The outworking of spiritual death is seen yet more clearly as the narrative of *Genesis* unfolds and the men of faith (Abel, Enoch, Noah, etc.) stand out from the mass of humanity who remain in spiritual darkness.

The early chapters of *Genesis* thus set forth the judicial nature of *human* death in its physical and spiritual dimensions. Death in the human kingdom is not a natural and intrinsic aspect of man's created existence but an evil that has entered *subsequent* to the creation of humanity. Within the terms of the threat of *Genesis* 2:17, the Lord might well have consigned his rebellious creatures to immediate total death; physical as well as spiritual and eternal. The Creator might justly have aborted the human race at that point. Yet while man was straightaway removed from the immediate possibility of immortality, and at once became subject to the now common, sufferings and sorrows of our present life, there was a gracious delay in the full outworking of physical death.¹⁰ Opportunity was given for repentance and a life-span allotted to men and women such that the human race could multiply and spread over the earth. In the forbearance and longsuffering of God, the full extent of the penalty was suspended in execution,¹⁰ so that human history might continue and God's purposes of grace might be unfolded. In the wisdom of God, the Deliverer was to be born of a human mother — a descendant of Adam.

The Sin/Death Nexus in the OT

The 'primaeval' connection between sin and death is a recurring motif in the Old Testament. This serves to underline the unnaturalness of death. In the regulations given in the Pentateuch, to the Israelite community, there are essentially two poles of existence: life and death.¹² Deformity and ritual uncleanness have a death-orientation. Dead animals are regarded as specially unclean and anyone who touches them becomes unclean. God is

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the living God and nothing which suggests death may enter his presence.¹³ Death is viewed as an intruder and the result of sin. Thus the system of divine worship associated with the Tabernacle carried with it a code of conduct. Violations of this code served to exclude the transgressor from the life-giving divine Presence.

When we turn to the statements of the writing-prophets the same connection is emphasised. Thus *Ezekiel* 18 affirms personal responsibility to obey the divine commands. "The soul who sins is the one who will die." (v4, 20).

Proverbs also, especially the first fifteen chapters, repeatedly presents life as the reward or sequel of virtue and death as the result of sin. Such repeated insistence does not permit us to take death merely as a metaphor for evil or as spiritual death alone. In some passages the reference to physical death is almost explicit. Nor, however, is it merely physical death that is the fruit of sin. In other words, death is *total* death.

In brief, the situation both of mankind and of the individual, prior to the coming of redemption, may be summarized in the terminology currently utilized for NT eschatology. There is both an 'already' and a 'not yet' aspect to *total death* during the present lifetime of man(kind). Such is the teaching of early *Genesis* and the OT. Indeed the 'already/not yet' structure of our Christian salvation is the positive counterpart to our desperate predicament of total death. Christians have already been raised with Christ 'spiritually' (*Ephesians* 2:6), but *not yet* bodily. Yet there is an indissoluble connection between our present Christian experience and our future glorification (*Romans* 8:29-30). Without *bodily* resurrection from the dead our salvation is incomplete. The consequences of the fall have not been fully dealt with until we are raised immortal.

New Testament Teaching on Death

The OT forms the primary conceptual background to the NT, and in the NT the link between Adam, sin and death is re-emphasized.¹⁴ Although the literature of inter-testamental Judaism is a further element in the NT background it is not considered now directly. This literature is non-canonical and furthermore the vast majority of NT quotations are selected from the OT rather than from subsequent writings. Within NT literature, the Pauline letters have the most to say on our theme. We must also notice the contributions of *James*, *Hebrews* and *John*.

James makes a striking statement about 'lust's pregnancy'. This links evil desire, sin and death in a casual chain, using the language of conception, birth and growth: "After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is

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full-grown, gives birth to death.” (1:15). This text strongly echoes the fall-narrative of *Genesis* 3. The language-imagery also incorporates the idea of delay in the full outworking of the effects of sin.

Hebrews 2:14f contains an important reference to the conquest of death by Jesus Christ. Death is viewed as a power which enslaves its captives until they are liberated by the Son of God.

In the Gospel and Epistles of John a clear relation between sin and death is established. However the means of the initial entry of both sin and death into the world is not explicitly discussed. Apart from the saving revelation of Jesus Christ, the human race is given up to death, and it is responsible for this because it is sinful. (8:21-24, 34-47). This is shown by the fact that men think they are free to please themselves (8:33). In relation to God, men think they have criteria by which divine revelation must be proved (5:3ff; 8:13ff). They will not acknowledge that God as Creator (1:4f) has a rightful authority over mankind.

More generally within the NT there is the central teaching that our deliverance from eternal death is by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. By his physical death for us he met our account before the justice of God. That is not to deny that there was spiritual death entailed in the crucifixion of Christ. He endured *total* death for our sins and rose again from the grave. That graphically underlines the fact that physical death is part of the penalty for sins. The last Adam dies to atone for the first Adam’s transgressions.

Pauline Teaching

The major Pauline statements on the relationship between death and the fall occur in the first letter to the Corinthians and in the Roman Epistle. The references in *I Corinthians* will be studied next.

A. *I Corinthians* 15 v. 21-22

21a *For since through man came death*
b *also through man came the resurrection of the dead.*

22a *For as in Adam all die*
b *so in Christ all will be made alive.*

The context of this extract is a discussion of the resurrection of the dead. In v. 20-28 Paul affirms that the final resurrection of Christians will follow that of Christ as surely as the full harvest follows the initial gathering of firstfruits. After the basic statement of v. 20, Paul introduces the comparison between Adam and Christ to make still clearer the position of Christ as the one who

inaugurates resurrection life. The parallel form of these statements is very clear. In v. 21a/b, the expression ‘through man’ occurs twice in the emphatic position. Both death and resurrection have been introduced into the world by human agency. It follows that death is not being regarded here as something natural. The absence of the article before ‘death’ and ‘resurrection’ implies that Paul may be referring to ‘total death’ or a quality of death. Nevertheless, in view of the context, *physical* death stands very much in the foreground as the counterpart to bodily resurrection (v. 21b).

The structure of the ‘firstfruits/harvest’ argument, based on the representative character of firstfruits, requires that the ‘man’ of v. 21b, who inaugurates resurrection of the dead, be a single individual.¹⁵ The name ‘Christ’ is specified in v. 22b. Furthermore the regular parallelism of v. 21 a/b and v. 22 a/b requires that the ‘man’ of v. 21a (= Adam of v. 22a) also be a single representative individual. Had Paul wished to assign the role of introducing death into the world to mankind generally, he could have utilized the generic term *anthrôpos* in v. 22a. In the Greek NT, however, ‘Adam’ points to the individual head of the human race. Accordingly, these verses clearly specify Adam, the individual, as the one who brought the ‘firstfruits’ of death into human existence. The parallelism of these verses further confirms that the historicity of Adam is equivalent to the historicity of Jesus Christ.

Although the ‘results’ achieved by Adam and Christ are diametrically opposite, consequences flow from both of them, as individuals, to ‘all’. At first glance it may appear that the ‘all’ of v. 22b is identical to the ‘all’ of v. 22a. However there are sound reasons for connecting the adjective ‘all’ to the preceding phrases rather than to the following verbs.¹⁶ Thus ‘*all in Adam die*’ and ‘*all in Christ will be made alive*’. Whereas ‘all in Adam’ includes the whole of mankind, ‘all in Christ’ means those who are Christian believers — as in the following verse 23: ‘those who belong to Christ’.

What is the precise relationship between Adam and the human experience of death? According to v. 22a, it is ‘*in Adam*’ that all die. Corresponding to this is the statement concerning Christians. That they will be made alive is based upon their being ‘in Christ’. The meaning of the expression ‘in Christ’ has been extensively discussed.¹⁷ To the extent that its significance is seen correctly, light will be thrown on the meaning of ‘in Adam’. Becoming a Christian involves union with Christ — which brings justifying righteousness, progressive inward transformation and ultimately bodily resurrection. Christ is both the agent (v. 21) and the pattern (v. 22) of this renewal. By contrast, union with Adam involves mankind in a complex of sin, condemnation and death. As v. 56 emphasizes, the sting death uses to kill is sin. Original and ‘actual’ sin are the means by which mankind works out the reality of being ‘in Adam’ and incurs the penalty of total death. This aspect of the question is elaborated further in *Romans* 5.

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Conclusion: Paul asserts in these verses that physical death entered, as an alien power, into the human race by the instrumentality of a single human individual — Adam. All who are ‘in Adam’ die in consequence of this fact.

B. *I Corinthians* 15 v. 35-49.

Further along in his classic discussion of the resurrection, Paul describes the nature of the resurrection body. This leads to additional references to the Adam/Christ parallel in vv. 45-49. Bultmann and others have argued that these verses suggest a different estimate of the position of Adam, prior to the fall, from that which is found earlier in vv. 21-22. It is claimed that vv. 35-49 teach that Adam was inherently and actually mortal by creation. Hence physical death is not a consequence of the fall. This interpretation, therefore, involves the contention not only that Paul contradicts the teaching of *Genesis* but that he contradicts his own teaching both in *Romans* 5 and in this very chapter. Obviously these verses are of critical importance.

The major emphasis on this section is the contrast between two cosmic orders — the psychical and the spiritual. These are associated, respectively, with the first man Adam and with the last Adam (Jesus Christ). A hard look at these verses shows that, while indeed Adam’s position by creation was inferior to that state which has been inaugurated by Christ, there is no indication that Adam was mortal before the fall.

Paul’s answer to the questions posed apropos the resurrection body commences with some analogies drawn from the realms of botany and astronomy (vv. 36-41). He prepares the ground for his major statements by showing that more than one sort of body is imaginable. Then vv. 42-44a develop the contrast between the dead body of the believer and his resurrection body. The mortal body is characterised by perishability, dishonour and weakness; the resurrection body by imperishability, glory and power. The contrasts are thus established point by point and lead up to the more comprehensive contrast of v. 44a: “It is sown a psychical body (*sôma psychikon*), it is raised a spiritual body (*sôma pneumatikon*). At this juncture there is an important turn in the argument.¹⁸ Paul now reasons directly from the psychical body to the spiritual body: “If there is a psychical body, there is also a spiritual body” (v. 44b). This statement is evidently an argument. Paul is reasoning *from* the existence of a psychical body *to* the existence of a spiritual body. The argument of v. 44b is validated by the appeal in v. 45 to *Genesis* 2:7. This suggests that from v. 44b onwards to v. 49, Paul has in mind the condition of mankind by virtue of creation. The argument of v. 44b is then an argument *from* the original order of creation *to* the ultimate resurrection order of existence. This is in keeping with the overall eschatological implications of the *Genesis* account of creation, whereas it would be impossible to argue from man’s sinful *post-fall* condition to the ‘necessary’ expectation of renewal and

resurrection. Accordingly the psychical body of v. 44b is the pre-fall creation body to which the threefold characteristics (perishability, dishonour, weakness) of v. 44a do *not* belong. Having therefore begun with consideration of the mortal post-fall body (vv. 35-44a), Paul has expanded the comparison with the resurrection body to show that Adam *by creation* anticipates and points to another, higher form of bodily existence (vv. 44b to 49). Accordingly, vv. 35-49, when examined as a unit, concur with the uniform Pauline emphasis on bodily death and mortality being a consequence of sin rather than an intrinsic feature of creation.

Briefly we may note that v. 45 also demonstrates Paul's view of the historicity of Adam. To the Septuagint wording of *Genesis* 2:7, Paul adds the words 'first' and 'Adam'. These additions emphasise that Paul is referring specifically to a particular man — Adam, as the one who stood at the beginning of the history of mankind.¹⁹ Adam is not merely a 'model' for humanity, but is an individual with a specific role in human history. In this verse the generality of mankind is only in view insofar as Adam is seen in his representative capacity as head of the old humanity.²⁰

C. *Romans* 5-8.

These chapters are the core of one of Paul's most systematic discussions of the Christian faith. Throughout this section the theme of sin and death constantly re-occurs.²¹ We shall briefly survey these references prior to consideration of the key passage 5:12-21.

(1) It is noticeable that Paul refers to each and every aspect of death and identifies these modes of death as consequences of sin. Thus *sin is the origin of total death*. Firstly, in 8:5f, there is discussion of *spiritual* death in contrast to spiritual life. This is a consequence of living 'according to the sinful nature' (*kata sarka*), of being subject to 'the law of sin and death' (v. 2). Spiritual death is also the theme of 6:16, 7:9 and 7:11 (and possibly 7:5). In each reference it is the fruit of sin, which has a progressive character as it enslaves mankind. Secondly, in 8:10ff there is reference to the *physical* death of the mortal body, *on account of sin*, and the glorious prospect of the resurrection. Thirdly, in 6:21 and 6:23 there is mention of *eternal* death: 'The wages of sin is death'. That this is a reference to eternal death is confirmed by the antithetic parallel with the following statement: 'but the gift of God is eternal life'. For Paul, eternal life is the final, definitive stage of salvation.²² In this his terminology differs from that of John who refers to the present Christian state as eternal life.

(2) Another aspect of these chapters which sheds light on our quest is the frequent reference to *life*. This contrasts with death whenever the latter is mentioned. For Paul, life is *total* life, the complete deliverance from the effects

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of sin. It follows that this '*life*' is a *deliverance from total death*. As we have seen, '*eternal life*' denotes for Paul the consummate stage of salvation. Nevertheless '*life*' is our present possession: 6:4, 11, 13; 8:10 etc.

(3) Finally we come to *Romans* 5:12-21. Here man is viewed as enmeshed in a complex of sin, condemnation and death. From this predicament Christ intervenes to bring righteousness, justification and life. How did the state of sin and death originate? Paul replies: 'sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin' (v. 12). 'By the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man' (v. 17). 'The result of one trespass was condemnation for all men' (v. 18). 'Sin reigned in death' (v. 21).

In this section it is not possible to restrict the meaning of 'death' to any one aspect. The concept of 'total death' seems to fit both the specific context of these verses²³ and also the wider context of chapters 6-8. Paul then is here reiterating the fact that every aspect of human death was *introduced* into the world by Adam's transgression²⁴. It is not therefore possible to exclude physical death from the consequence of the fall.

Conclusions

The foundational statements of *Genesis* and the apostolic interpretation of these statements in the NT concur in their teaching on the origin of death in the human race. Death in its every aspect — total death — was not a part of the original creation. Man was originally created free from physical death. Its present reign is unnatural. It is the last *enemy*. It follows that any Christian view of the origin of mankind must give due recognition to this biblical datum.

Notes

1. Although it is true that OT and NT alike regard man's nature as holistic, nevertheless there is duality within the underlying unity of nature. Thus physical death involves separation of spirit from body. cf *Ecclesiastes* 12:7 and R.H. Gundry, '*Sōma* in Biblical Theology'. (CUP, 1976) p. 159f.
2. On account of the body/spirit separation at physical death, John Murray prefers the terminology of *psycho-physical death*. (Collected Writings Vol II, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979 p. 56).
3. Compare 2:5 and 4:18: '... alienated from the life of God'.
4. cf. *Jude* 12f and *Matthew* 3:12, *Mark* 9:43, 47ff.
5. 'Death' is sometimes used in various metaphorical senses; e.g. *Luke* 15:24; *Rev.* 3:1, 2.
6. J. Laidlaw utilizes the term '*legal death*' for the state of being under condemnation but prior to full execution of sentence. (Foundation truths of Scripture p. 32). John Murray uses the term '*Judicial death*' for the same concept. (*Op.cit.* p. 56).
7. The same phrase is used in *I Kings* 2:37. It expresses *certainty* of sequence, not necessarily temporal *immediacy*.

8. Anchor Bible *Genesis* (1964) p. 17.
9. As G. Vos observed (*Biblical Theology* p. 37f), these words occur within the context of a judgemental curse (v. 17-19) rather than in an account of that which is natural by virtue of creation.
10. Even though psycho-physical death was delayed, Adam and Eve at once became mortal and ageing processes were initiated. Full discussion of the 'mechanism' of the physical death process is outside the scope of our present enquiry. Scripture however lays the primary emphasis upon death as a judgement — sin attracts the divine curse. There is scant biblical evidence for an organic *ex opere operato* view of the connection between sin and death.
11. Why then did Enoch and Elijah not die? And why will those who are alive at Christ's second coming not die? Well, but for Christ they would die as a punishment for sin. In fact they did (or will) experience every dimension of spiritual and physical death except for the final dissolution of the body. The experience of these folk includes pain, bodily weakness etc. Consequently, these individuals stand in solidarity with the rest of the human race enmeshed in the complex of sin, condemnation and death (both physical and spiritual). Their exceptional experience is in their 'premature' translation to Glory. Yet their full 'glorification' with 'resurrection bodies' will not precede that of other 'saints' (*1 Thess.* 4:15).
12. *Deuteronomy* 30:15-19.
13. cf G. Wenham in *Christ The Lord* (ed. H.H. Rowdon; D. Guthrie *Festschrift*; IVP, 1982) p. 115-126. Also *The Book of Leviticus* (New International Commentary, Eerdmans, 1979).
14. L. Morris *The Wages of Sin* (Tyndale NT Lecture 1954).
15. D.A. Carson, 'Adam in the Epistles of Paul'. (*In the Beginning*, BCS, 1980) p. 30f. R. Scroggs, *The Last Adam* (CUP, 1966) p. 83, 89ff.
16. The placement of a qualifying phrase before 'all' (*pantes*) occurs elsewhere in *1 Corinthians* 7:17; 9:24; 12:13; 13:2; 15:7, 10.
17. D. Guthrie *New Testament Theology*, IVP (1981) p. 647ff.
18. For the following line of exegesis see: G. Vos *The Pauline Eschatology* (Eerdmans, 1961) p. 169f, n. 19, 183. H. Ridderbos, *Paul* p. 542 n. 152. R.B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, (Baker, 1978) p. 78-92. A.T. Lincoln, *Paradise now and not yet* (CUP, 1981), p. 42ff. R.J. Sider, *NTS* 21 (1975) p. 428-39.
19. J.A. Schep, *The Nature of the Resurrection body* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964, p. 173. B.A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos — Psychikos terminology in 1 Corinthians*, SBL, Dissertation Series 1973) p. 24ff.
20. cf. Gaffin, *op. cit.* p. 82.
21. An excellent discussion is provided by T. Barosse in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15 (1953) p. 438-459: 'Death and sin in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans.' The exegesis is penetrating and profound. Our only divergence in judgment is to question the tentative support given to the 'organic' view of the connection between sin and death, (p. 458).
22. See also, *Gal.* 6:8, *Rom.* 2:7, *1 Tim.* 4:8, *Titus* 1:2, 3:7 etc.
23. For detailed analysis of *Romans* 5:12-21 see for example the Commentaries of J. Murray and C.E.B. Cranfield and the exposition by D.M. Lloyd-Jones. Note also S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. *Romans* 5:12 — An Exercise in Exegesis and Theology' *New Dimensions in NT Study* ed. R.N. Longenecker and M.C. Tenney. (Zondervan, 1974) p. 298-316, and S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen (1981) p. 260-268).
24. The connection between Adam's sin and mankind is helpfully discussed by J. Murray: *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (PRPC) 1977.

EVIL, EVOLUTION AND THE FALL*

N. M. de S. Cameron

In the previous chapter, we suggested, among other things, a number of interpretations of Genesis 1-3 that do not depend on a 'wooden' or 'literal' reading of the passage, and that appear to be supported by the New Testament understanding of it. We turn now to consider their significance, especially when viewed in the light of a further consideration — the 'theodicy' of the Fall as formulated by Christians. We mentioned that, from a certain point of view, Genesis 1-3 itself reads as a theodicy, a defence of the goodness of God. As it happens, Christian thinkers, in their endeavour to understand the meaning of evil in the world and to defend the Faith in the face of it, have had recourse to this passage and developed a philosophical theory that has underlain almost all Christian thought on the subject.

The basic 'problem of evil' may be stated thus: 'If God is all-powerful and loving, why is there evil in the world? Either he is not powerful enough to do anything about it, or he is not loving enough to care to do so.' The Christian response, based on the story of the Fall and its New Testament interpretation, has been in terms of what is often called the 'free-will defence'. A recent essay by a Christian philosopher outlined it thus:

A world containing creatures who freely perform both good and evil actions — and do more good than evil — is more valuable than a world containing quasi-automata who always do what is right because they are unable to do otherwise. Now God can create free creatures, but he cannot causally or otherwise determine them to do what is right; for if he does so they do not do what is right *freely*. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, he must create creatures capable of moral evil; but he cannot create the possibility of moral evil and at the same time prohibit its actuality. And as it turned out, some of the free creatures God created exercised their freedom to do what is wrong; hence moral evil. The fact that free creatures sometimes err, however, in no way tells against God's omnipotence or against his goodness; for he could forestall the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good.¹

The essay we are quoting was written to counter philosophical objections to the theory, and is not therefore concerned with the biblical detail and implications with which, in the context of Christian theology, it may be filled. It should also be said that it is not dependent upon an 'Arminian' idea of the nature of free-will for its efficacy; indeed, it is generally referred to as the 'Augustinian' view of the origin of evil, and it is hard to see any possible Christian explanation of the origin of evil which can do without it altogether,

* This chapter is an extract from *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible*, published by Paternoster Press on March 24th, 1983.

though there can be differences in matters of emphasis. It underlies the consensus Christian view which we have already quoted Mascall as outlining, and which is worth bringing once more to our attention: 'It was until recent years almost universally held that all the evils, both moral and physical, which affect this earth are in some way or other derived from the first act by which a bodily creature endowed with reason deliberately set itself against what it knew to be the will of God.'² As we turn now to an examination of a popular 'harmony' of Christianity and evolution, we must remind ourselves of the importance of the doctrine of the Fall, and of its essential ingredient: the man who falls. He is endowed with reason, responsible for his actions, and his deed has significance for the whole earth since he stands at its head, as the 'high priest' of creation. In the divine moral economy, what he does affects it all. As Calvin writes (*Institutes* 2:1:5), 'There cannot be a doubt that creation bears part of the punishment deserved by man, for whose use all other creatures were made.' This conception is, indeed, essential, if the argument is to bear the weight which it must. And it is of such vital importance that, without it, we have no reasoned defence of the goodness of God. Without the free decision of a rational being to interpose between the goodness of the Creator and his work and its present degeneracy and suffering, the doctrine of God's goodness becomes wholly irrational. One writer, attacking the tendency at the end of the eighteenth century to invoke 'proofs' of God from the created order, trenchantly maintained that, if one argues from the creation — with all its suffering and agony, especially in the animal orders — the logical step is to believe that the world was created not by a good God but by a demon. It was a point well made, and it is important for Christians to realise that there is no lack of faith involved in our being perturbed by evil in the world. It is the Bible itself that opens with the Great Theodicy, proclaiming the goodness of the original world and man's responsibility for its fall into sin and decay. That is how important the question is.

And the relevance of the question appears when we consider the kind of 'harmony' of Christianity and evolution that some have attempted in print, but that many simply assume as they try to hold together the theory of evolution and the idea of the Fall. It is not without significance that only rarely do we find a detailed attempt to defend evolution and relate it to the text of Genesis. There are, however, examples, and we give one here. John Stott has written:

It seem perfectly possible to reconcile the historicity of Adam with at least some (theistic) evolutionary theory. Many biblical Christians in fact do so, believing them to be not entirely incompatible. To assert the historicity of an original pair who sinned through disobedience is one thing; it is quite another to deny all evolution and to assert the separate and special creation of everything, including both subhuman creatures and Adam's body. The

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suggestion (for it is no more than that) does not seem to me to be against Scripture and therefore impossible that when God made man in His own image, what He did was to stamp His own likeness on one of the many 'hominids' which appears to have been living at the time.³

It is our contention that such a 'harmony' on examination breaks down, not simply because in this detail or that it needs emendation, but because of logical factors at play in two quite different ways of looking at man, his origin, and the fact of evil. Irrespective of a 'literal' reading of Genesis, Christian theistic evolution is incoherent and a contradiction in terms. This may be demonstrated with respect to man and his liability to death, and the sufferings of the animals.

1. MAN AND HIS DEATH

The harmony suggested by John Stott and many others would seek a safe channel between the Scylla of rejecting evolution, and the Charybdis of rejecting the Bible. God stamped his image 'on one of the many "hominids" which appear to have been living at the time.' The ape in question became, in a flash, a man. It became moral, self-conscious, personal, responsible — human. And what was the consequence of that first man's exercise of his moral choice? It was to fall. He chose to rebel against his Maker, and in doing so he brought the curse of mortality and all that went with it upon his race.

This harmony, or something very like it, has been very widely adopted by Christians — some after much thought, others only half-consciously, since the mind drifts into some such position in seeking to take both science and Scripture seriously. The great question is, is it coherent? Does it make sense?

First of all, any theory that accepts the doctrine of the Fall must assume that there was a definite lapse in time between creation (the 'stamping' of the 'hominid' in Stott's language) and fall (the first misuse of freedom). There must have been a period of original righteousness, to use the old phrase, or maybe original innocence, since a more negative quality may better suit Adam before his probation. Time must have elapsed between 'creation' and 'fall'. The period need not have been long, and though earlier commentators disputed whether a lengthy period did not elapse in Eden, strictly speaking a day, or an hour, or a minute, or even less, would be sufficient; a period in principle capable of measurement to give us a Fall in space and time. Unless it is a measureable period, then no wedge may be driven between creation and Fall, and, instead, we have man created already fallen. This is the position adopted, for example, by John Hick, in his book *Evil and the God of Love*, under

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pressure of much the same arguments as we are using, and as an alternative to questioning evolution (which he refuses to do).

The question which inevitably arises is this: in what state was Adam, the first man, during this albeit brief period? He had not fallen, so he could not have been under the curse. He was not subject to death, or to any of the evils which it has brought with it into our world. He was free from the consequences of an act he had not yet taken. And although the period of time involved may have been exceedingly short, this is an important question, since the length of that period is for practical purposes irrelevant. The man may, indeed, have fallen long before his immortality would have become evident (whether it is conceived of as unending existence on the earth, or as involving a 'translation' into the spiritual realm). But death is no isolated incident in human existence. It is the final product of processes of ageing and decay that are in evidence right from the start of life, and very much in evidence of the body of a mature man. In the supralapsarian second, what kind of man was Adam? In principle, an analysis of his constitution would have revealed that either he was subject to death, or he was not; if he was, it cannot be said to have been brought into human experience by the Fall; if he was not, the theistic evolutionary thesis is incoherent. Why this is so becomes plain on analysis of the question.

The dilemma is logically incapable of resolution, so no amount of tinkering with harmonistic theories will be of value; and it becomes so the moment it is admitted as a datum that the Fall had tangible, physical effects on man, in bringing death (and other sorrows) into his experience. If his physical continuity with the lower animals is assumed, the physical principle of death is something he will naturally inherit from his forebears. The implanting of a spiritual nature will have no effect at all upon that, and indeed the theistic evolutionists do not intend that it should. Yet the doctrine of the Fall, deeply rooted in the teaching of Scripture, depends upon death being the consequence of man's free decision, and that decision must be temporarily separated from his becoming man; so there must be a period of time during which he is free from what, on the evolutionary theory, the brutes have bequeathed him.

For the problem to be solved, its terms must be changed. On the one hand, it is possible to admit that Adam was under the effects of what Scripture terms the curse right from the start, before as well as after his decision; but this overthrows the sin-death causality, and in so doing pulls the rug from under the feet of the evangelical understanding of the atonement. Alternatively, one may opt for some form of interference with the evolutionary process, effectively a form of 'special creation', in which the Creator breaks the physical continuity of man and the animals, either creating man directly and

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immediately, or altering the physical constitution of the animal at the same time as implanting in it a spiritual nature. This option has its attractions, since it appears to preserve the Scripture teaching without interfering in the fundamental scientific understanding of what took place (the special creation, at least in the second form suggested, would make a difference to man for only a very brief period, after which he would relapse into his physical likeness to the apes).

However, against this revised position there remains a decisive argument. The world which God made for man to inhabit was 'very good'. It had been prepared to receive him as its crown, and the setting was constructed so as to be ideal for the probation to which Adam and Eve were called. The world was not created with the Fall in prospect, still less with the curse already let loose.

When, therefore, we consider the harmony we have outlined against the background of the world in which the first man was created, we see that his environment, as evolved, was such as would destroy him. As a physical being, he would have been prey not only to carnivorous beasts but to the more virulent disease organisms, such as cholera. Only if they were removed from the earth would his freedom from death be preserved. But more: we must take account of the grave 'threat posed to a culturally primitive man by the possibility of natural disasters — volcanoes, earthquakes, tidal waves — in all their unpredictable savagery. Would they not take their toll of these beings made for immortality? Human life and the natural order are so closely connected that it is impossible to believe that a good Creator could have implanted spiritual life and his own image in a brute creature and made it a man, with all the infinite dignity which that implies — especially before the Fall — and yet in a world that threatened his life on every hand. Rather, the 'special creation' required for Adam to be created an immortal being, free from the curse, is the special creation of a whole new order, the complete reconstruction of the evolutionary order of nature, and its replacement by another. Which is another way of saying that the harmony with which we began, even reconstructed as we have suggested, is incoherent.

We see, then, that a fundamental discontinuity is required in the evolutionary pattern if it is to be harmonised with the requirements of Scripture; so great, indeed, as to overthrow the theory. There can be no sense in God creating according to the evolutionary pattern only to undo and re-create the world when the time has come for man to appear.

2. ANIMAL SUFFERING

We have discussed something of the effect of the natural world on man; we turn now to an aspect of that world in itself. The principal area within it in

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which the problem of evil arises is that of the experience of pain and suffering on the part of animals. The acknowledgement that some such suffering does occur raises a grave problem for theodicy. Indeed, to some thinkers, the problem of animal suffering is the greatest of all such problems, since they are incapable of moral decisions and could therefore not be guilty of failings that might deserve pain, or open to the moral improvement that might result from it. But do animals really suffer?

Some writers have emphasised the insignificance of suffering to animals, and if it is true that what we regard as animal suffering is very largely the product of our own imagination then the problem we face is much less; though it remains a problem. There can be little doubt that there *appears* to be great suffering in the animal kingdom. One writer, for instance, has put it like this:

'As far as the animals are concerned, (the world) is one huge, perpetual, battle-field; one wide, vast, endless, scene of almost universal carnage and blood. Thousands are dying that one may live, and the battle is always to the strong. And certainly death, in many forms in which it is inflicted, seems terrible and painful . . .'⁴

How accurately do these vivid impressions speak of the actual experiences of animals?

It is clearly impossible for a man to understand directly and immediately even the pain and suffering of another human being, since he cannot enter into his consciousness, so the same is true to a greater degree with a sub-human creature. But that does not rule out indirect observation of the conscious experiences of others, human or not. Adult humans can express their feelings in language. Small children and those under certain handicaps cannot, so a more roundabout route must be taken; and the same may be said for animals. Certain questions readily present themselves. Do the animals have the same nervous apparatus which we know in ourselves to mediate pain? Do they manifest the behavioural responses which accompany pain in human beings? Are we right to suppose that they are immune to 'mental' suffering — for instance, the result of the physical 'near-misses' that make up much of a hunted animal's life? Does the low level of consciousness in animals free them from anticipation and recollection, and if so does this dramatically reduce their experience of pain? We can briefly look at each of these questions in turn, and seek an answer to them in some of the latest scientific thinking on the subject, contained in the report of the Brambell Committee set by H.M. Government to look into 'factory farming' methods (Cmnd. 2836). The Committee included a number of eminent scientists, including Professor W.H. Thorpe, FRS, of the Animal Behaviour department at Cambridge University. We may fairly take their results as representative of modern scientific thinking in the field.

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First, as regards the particular nervous apparatus which in man produces the sensation of physical pain, the answer is straightforward. Some mammals are known to have such apparatus, and all may be presumed to have it: 'We believe that the physiological, and more particularly the anatomical, evidence fully justifies and reinforces the commonsense belief that animals feel pain' (p. 82).

Secondly, what of the behavioural responses of animals? The Committee report: 'Animals show unmistakable signs of suffering from pain, exhaustion, fright, frustration and so forth, and the better we are acquainted with them the more readily we detect these signs' (p. 9).

But, thirdly, what of 'mental' suffering? Is that possible in creatures with a low level of consciousness? The Committee report:

'A reliable indication can be obtained by comparing the symptoms exhibited by animals with those which are known to accompany mental suffering in human beings. Awareness of, and preparations for, danger are associated in man with a general stimulation of the nervous and endocrine systems Animals show these signs of agitation, and it is reasonable to suppose that they feel their sensory or mental accompaniments as well . . . (we) are satisfied that animals do suffer from acute fear and terror' (p. 83).

We see, then, that animals do suffer both physical and mental pain. The final question is to what degree such suffering is mitigated by the lower level of consciousness of these creatures? While 'it is probably that . . . imaginative anticipation, which plays such a large part in human suffering, is incomparably less well developed in most animals . . . many animals can both remember the past and fear the future to some extent' (p. 9). So the lower level of consciousness does lessen the mental accompaniments of pain, but to a degree only. 'Animals suffer pain in the same way as human beings' (p. 82), and 'there are sound reasons for believing that [pain, suffering and stress] are substantial' in some animals (p. 10).

The conclusions of the Report therefore largely tally with the 'commonsense' view of most people taken from their own experience of animals. Ironically, they also tally with what one would expect from an evolutionary perspective; that fundamentally the physical nature of man and the animals is similar. We may conclude, therefore, that animal suffering is a real, indeed a grave, problem for theodicy. The biblical answer to the problem — the Christian answer down the centuries — we have seen to lie in the connection of evil in nature with the Fall of man. According to the theory of evolution, of course, animal suffering is a natural phenomenon which has existed from the birth of the animal kingdom millions of years before the origin of man. It is not possible to harmonise these two explanations.

3. THE FALL

We see, therefore, that the idea of world history implicit in the theory of evolution is one in which both the animal kingdom and the earliest man experience from the start what in biblical terms are evidences of fallenness that result from the curse. The evolutionary idea is of a world coming into existence already fallen. As we have remarked, this is the very position taken up by John Hick in his massive work on the problem of evil: the very arguments we have examined, among others, drive him into believing that God made the world as a fallen world. That is the logical implication of holding the theory of evolution, and it is well that we should lay it bare and see its implications for what they are.

By contrast, Scripture — not necessarily taken ‘literally’; simply searched for its teaching — Scripture teaches an alternative, and that alternative, set forth in Genesis 1-3 and expanded in the New Testament, carefully and definitely makes a separation between God and the entry of evil into his creation. The theodicy of Christian theology, building upon the scriptural testimony, defends the goodness of God by setting the free decision of the first man as the factor bringing ‘death into the world and all our woe’. The choice, therefore, is inescapable, between a revised Christianity such as that of John Hick (which proves to be no Christianity at all), and an orthodox Christianity which will face the conclusions of modern science and question them. The idea that somehow we may eat our cake and have it rests upon a fallacy.

Notes

1. Alvin Plantinga, ‘The Free-Will Defence’, reprinted in *The Philosophy of Religion*. ed. B. Mitchell, London, 1971.
2. E.L. Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science*. p. 32.
3. *Church of England Newspaper*, June 17th, 1968; cited in C. Chapman, *Christianity on Trial*, Vol. 2, p. 115, Berkhamsted, 1974.
4. Theodore Wood, *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* vol. 25 p. 254.

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

by David J. Tyler

It is a fact of history that the scientific method was first formulated and practised in countries deeply influenced by Christian beliefs. The majority of the founders of the Royal Society in England were men who held the Bible in high esteem. It is appropriate to ask — is there a connection between Biblical teaching and the rise of modern science? There are good reasons to think that there is a connection, and one of these is considered in this article. (Hooykaas explores other connections at some length — cf. Bibliography).

I. BIBLICAL TEACHING ON CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

The opening chapters of Genesis document God's work of creation. By the word of God's mouth, the universe came into being: "for he spoke, and it came to be." (Ps. 33:9). In six days, the earth was formed and fashioned into a place suitable for the habitation of man. It is important to note some key phrases at the beginning of Genesis 2. The heavens and the earth "were completed." God "had finished the work he had been doing." He rested from all the work of creating "that he had done." God's creative activity was ended, and creation is referred to as a past work.

If creation is past, what can be said about God's subsequent activity? Some have likened the universe to a clock, which has been wound up and left to run. They have likened God to the watchmaker, who is no longer actively involved with the work of his hands. However, there is no basis for this view in the pages of scripture. On the contrary, God is active continuously! Consider, for example, Psalm 104 which speaks of God causing the springs to flow with water (v. 10), the rain to fall on the mountains (v. 13), the grass to grow (v. 14) and brings forth food for man (v. 14-15). God is perceived to be actively ordering the processes of water flow, rainfall and plant growth. Because of this the Psalmist is thankful to God for the provision of his material needs. Jesus Christ makes reference to this same divine activity in the Sermon on the Mount. Does not our heavenly Father feed the birds and clothe the lilies of the field? (Matt. 6:25ff). He does, and he will also provide for the needs of the children of the kingdom. This picture of God upholding his creation, ordering its affairs and providing for his creatures is fundamental to the teaching of the Bible. To aid communication, the term "providence" has been given to this aspect of God's activity in the world.

CREATION:

Creation is a work which God did in the beginning, by the word of his power. He made out of nothing the whole universe and, in particular, the earth with all its living things. God declared the finished work of creation to be very good.

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PROVIDENCE: God's work of providence is his governing, ordering and preserving of all the things which he made. This upholding of the work of creation is by his power, according to his wisdom, and for his own glory.

The distinction between a finished creation and a continuing providence is found on a number of occasions in the New Testament. In his address to the Athenian philosophers, Paul referred to "the God who made the world and everything in it", and also said "for in him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:24, 28). When he wrote to the Colossian church, Paul spoke of Christ as the image of the invisible God. "For by him all things were created . . . all things were created by him and for him." In addition to this, "in him all things hold together." (Col. 1:15-17). The writer to the Hebrews also identifies Christ as the agent of the Father in creation: "through whom he made the universe." This Christ is now "sustaining all things by his powerful word." (Heb. 1:1-3). In each of these passages, a distinction is made between creation and providence. In each case creation is past and providence is continuing. It is the doctrine of providence that is particularly relevant to the scientific method.

II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Not only does the Bible teach that God upholds and orders his creation, it also makes the consistency of this ordering an example of God's faithfulness. (Genesis 8:22, Job 38-41, Ps. 19:1-6, Ps. 146-148). There is predictability and reliability in providence, because God's government of his creation reflects his character. It follows, therefore, that men can study and describe the pattern of God's providential activity. Awareness of God's providence is really a stimulus for scientific activity. If men are confident that God's government of his creation is consistent, then there is no reason why rational men cannot 'think God's thoughts after him', which is how one eminent early scientist described his own work.

III. THE SCOPE OF SCIENTIFIC ENQUIRY

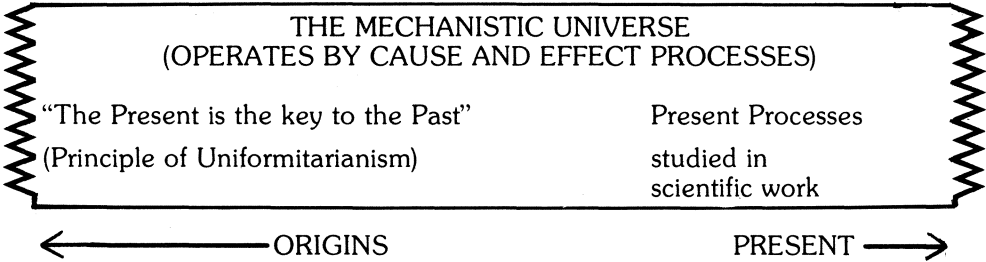
Biblically-based thinking must take note of the distinction between creation and providence. Subject matter within the scope of God's providence is appropriate for scientific study. By contrast, the topic of creation is inappropriate for scientific investigation. Whilst God is no less active in providence than he was in creation, it is the latter work that is appropriately described as being miraculous. In general, miracles occur when God acts in ways different to his normal pattern. The miracle of creation is clearly distinguished in scripture from providence, which is the normal working of God in upholding and sustaining the universe. The diagram below is designed to illustrate this distinction.

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CREATION (MIRACLE) Cannot be studied	PROVIDENCE (UPHOLDING AND ORDERING OF CREATION) May be studied — scientific work
ORIGINS (CREATION WEEK)	PRESENT (ALL TIME SINCE CREATION WEEK)

Therefore, a christian man of science will refrain from attempting to rationalise creation, or to reconstruct models of creation using the scientific laws he has discovered by a study of God's providence.

By way of contrast, consider the mechanistic/evolutionary view of science and of origins.



In this case, there can be no distinction between creation and providence, because divine activity in the past is ruled out of consideration as a matter of principle. Scientific work in the present is based on the mechanistic maxim that every effect, past and present, must have a natural cause. In this case, the study of origins is by no means excluded from consideration. In a mechanistic universe, the origin of the universe, the origin of life and the origin of species are all presupposed to have mechanistic explanations. Investigations proceed by using the natural processes observed in the present as a basis for interpreting the past. This rule has generally been described as the principle of uniformitarianism, and it is the evolutionary scheme of origins which has resulted from this mechanistic view of the universe.

IV. THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT ABOUT ORIGINS

Clearly, there is a fundamental difference in the thought patterns of biblical and mechanistic scientists. No Christian can adopt the mechanistic scheme without sacrificing the biblical distinction between creation and providence. However, many attempt to do this and advocate a scheme known as “theistic evolution’. They suggest that God ‘created’ all the living organisms in the world using the process of evolution. They suggest that just as the mechanistic view is deficient in failing to recognise the power of God in present day

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processes, so also it fails to recognise his hand in the evolution picture developed by the mechanistic scientists, and the concept of divine creation.

Some questions that must be faced by theistic evolutionists are as follows. Is this position consistent with Scripture? Is it Biblical to advocate a creation process which is essentially no different from God's providential ordering of his creation? Is creation indistinguishable from providence? In what sense can the creation be said to be "finished" or "ended", if the same processes that were operating then are in operation now? The writer has never heard or read satisfactory answers to these questions.

V. CONCLUSION

Questions about origins have always loomed large in the thinking of men. However, it is not always appreciated that the answers which men suggest are deeply influenced by the presuppositions to which they hold. The methods and the conclusions of scientists who are Biblical Christians will inevitably differ from those with mechanistic assumption. It is the argument here that these different frames of reference give radically different answers to fundamental questions about origins. For the Biblical Christian, the distinction between God's past acts of creation and his continuing providential government of all that he has made means that creation lies outside the sphere of scientific enquiry and is essentially miraculous and a matter of revelation. For the mechanistic philosopher, present day processes must be assumed to be sufficient to explain the origin of all things by naturalistic means. The attempted harmonisation of Biblical creation and mechanistic evolution, which regards these two positions as complementary, results in the sacrifice of the Biblical doctrine and creation.

For the Christian, these issues are too important not to be faced. If the mechanistic evolutionary picture is at variance with scripture, the implications are immense. At very least, it means that man, in his belief, can put aside all thoughts of God as creator so that life can be lived without reference to him. All who believe that God has given men his word in the pages of scripture are encouraged to think again and to test all things against that touchstone.

"Great are the works of the Lord, they are pondered by all who delight in them." (Ps. 111:2).

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CONSEQUENCES OF EVOLUTION

John Sharp

Evolution has many guises. Often it is held, not as a specific biological theory, but as a vague belief in evolution. It is simply assumed that evolution is true and this brings an undefined commitment to the idea of progress and development. There is the idea that all things have evolved and we have James Young Simpson talking about the ‘evolution of evolution.’

So it is not just a particular biological theory that the creationist must struggle against. There is this undefined belief in progress, a commitment to a philosophy or worldview of evolution. In this context everything from motor cars to religion have been said to evolve. It seems to me that there are real dangers in this general worldview and the implications are serious. They stand opposed to a biblical worldview. To accept the idea of evolution undermines many Christian doctrines and truths.

1. *Evolution undermines the doctrine of God.* If we accept evolutionary theory then we seem to be accepting a creation with many ‘blind alleys’. It is a creation where death and suffering are intrinsically part of life. This gives a God who is the origin of suffering and death. But Scripture clearly teaches us of a God who does not need to experiment to bring about His purposes; of a God who created order and not disharmony. Indeed we are told that the present disharmony within the world (nature ‘red in tooth and claw’?) is the result of man’s rebellion against God and not something built into creation by God.

2. *Evolution undermines the doctrine of creation.* It is difficult to equate the idea of a creation that God saw as ‘very good’ with the idea that nature/man was imperfect or inferior and needed to develop by some process of selection and mutation to more complex forms of life. Today there is a tendency to play down the idea of God creating out of nothing, and an increasing tendency to talk about the wonders of nature —generally with a capital ‘N’. So what belongs to God is assigned to this metaphysical entity ‘Nature’. It is interesting to note that long ago Robert Boyle, one of the founders of modern chemistry, warned of the danger of replacing God with ‘Nature’ and worshipping God’s handiwork rather than the Creator Himself.

3. *Evolution undermines the doctrine of man.* Although in evolutionary thought man can rejoice that he is a risen, not a fallen, being — it is man with a capital ‘M’ that is important, not individuals. As Jacques Barzun has noted: “The Darwinist had shown that the individual did not matter — only the race.” But Scripture tells us that each individual is precious in God’s sight; that each individual is the bearer of God’s image. Scripture tells us of God’s tender

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concern for individuals. It is not man in the abstract with whom God deals but with individuals, with you and me. All men are created equal before God, there is no suggestion that some are born higher or lower on an evolutionary scale. Evolution inevitably diminishes men and women. As Diderot, the French Encyclopedist, said: “There is no difference between men and animals and plants and things.” All the popular television programmes about ‘nature’ show man as merely a highly developed animal — he is not seen in his high role or unique character as the image-bearer of God.

While it may not necessarily follow it would seem in practice that those Christians who hold to evolution downgrade Adam. Yet the New Testament is clear in its acceptance of the historicity of Genesis chapters 1 to 3. So the problem is not simply with the early chapters of Genesis but also with the New Testament.

4. *Evolution undermines the doctrine of sin.* Evolutionary thinking is summed up by Sir Oliver Lodge when he said: “Taught by science we learn that there has been no fall of man; there has been a rise.” So evolution talks of the elimination of the beast in man, of man becoming a higher, better creature. It treats death as something organic and natural to man. But the revelation of God is quite different. Scripture tells us clearly that man is a fallen, sinful creature and that death — both physical and spiritual — is not a consequence of the way we were made, but of our rebellion against God. This is why death could find no hold on Christ, because He was sinless. But, of course, even sinful man can be redeemed through the work of Christ. It is through Christ we become new creatures — not through evolution.

5. *Evolution undermines Christian ethics.* If evolution were true then sin would be a biological aberration which needed to be bred out of man. More than that, it means that Nietzsche was right in asserting that all ethical standards must be turned upside down. The future must belong to the strong, not the weak. It is the fittest that survive so only the most ruthless can triumph.

6. *Evolution undermines the atonement.* This must follow if sin is just part of man’s evolutionary development. Evolution, as a theory of progress, sees mankind developing and, as a biological theory, tends to see sin and death as organic and natural. If this is true the atonement is meaningless. But Scripture clearly teaches that man is a sinner and unable to escape by himself from the effects of the Fall. Therefore it was necessary for Christ to die. Man’s salvation depends upon the finished work of Christ on Calvary and not biological evolution.

7. *Evolution undermines the authority of Scripture.* Many of the accepted ideas of evolutionary thought are directly opposed to the teaching of

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Scripture. We have two revelations from God. God reveals himself in the world around us (general revelation) and through the Word, written and living, Scripture and Christ (special revelation). It is an important principle that Scripture as special revelation is our primary datum. As God's Word cannot contradict His works we should beware of theories of the world that do not agree with what He has written for our instruction in His word.

So as I think again on the consequences of accepting evolution it seems to me that its popular acceptance has caused serious erosion of many fundamental aspects of the Christian Gospel.

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Post-Darwinian Controversies

John C. Whitcomb

The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900, by James R. Moore. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Pp. 502. \$37.50.

With 350 pages of closely reasoned historical analysis and an impeccable style, bolstered by 986 bibliographically illuminating endnotes and a 58-page bibliography, James R. Moore of England seeks to demonstrate the “theological orthodoxy” of Darwinism and to explain all significant Protestant responses to Darwin in both Great Britain and America during the last three decades of the nineteenth century in the light of this thesis.

It is indeed a major undertaking, and the result is a masterpiece of historical erudition. It appears that no non-Catholic writer on either side of the Atlantic who interacted with Darwin’s theory of organic evolution escapes Moore’s attention (p. 11 and n. 18). All previous writers on the history of these controversies are criticized for their shallow or provincial approach in neglecting “the thousands of books and articles on evolution and religion that were published in the wake of *The Origin of Species*” (p. 7).

The author, who serves as Lecturer in the History of Science and Technology in The Open University (England), wrote a doctoral thesis on this subject at the University of Manchester in 1975 (pp. x, 355 n. 23), and, with the aid of a generous grant, expanded his work into the present form early in 1978, using the large library collection at Princeton Theological Seminary as well as bibliographic resources available in England.

The basic thesis of the book is that a paradoxical harmony existed between true Darwinian evolutionism and Calvinistic/trinitarian orthodoxy (pp. 15-16, 280, 289-95, 297-98, 308, 327, 334-36, 341, 345, 349, 398 n. 110), even though Darwin himself never saw this and finally abandoned Christian theism by sinking into deism and finally agnosticism (pp. ix, 15-16, 109, 276, 315, 326-40, 346-51).

In order to accomplish this incredible *tour de force*, Moore not only leaves no stone unturned in eliminating the idea of “warfare” and “militant conflict” between science and Christianity but, inevitably, redefines Christian “orthodoxy” to the total exclusion of all forms of “Biblical fundamentalism” with its

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“literalistic” hermeneutics. If Christianity could somehow be “transformed” and “rightly viewed” (pp. 1, 16), there could be no conflict with Darwinism!

For “Fundamentalism” Moore has nothing but contempt. Because of their “deeply biased interpretations of the post-Darwinian controversies” (p. 69), “the movement of aggressive advocates of ‘fundamental’ Christianity which appeared in the United States about the year 1920” (p. 70) “could not remember the evangelical evolutionists among their ancestors” (p. 73) such as A.H. Strong, B.B. Warfield, James Orr, and G.F. Wright (pp. 71-72), and, thus, “bereft of intellectual leadership . . . panicked” (p. 74). Devoid of “Galilean charity . . . their indictments of modernism and evolution closely resembled Allied propaganda” which taught Americans “to hate Germany, that barbaric nation which, to the Fundamentalist way of thinking, had uniquely fostered critical and evolutionary thought.” Now it became the duty of fundamentalists to avenge the “theological atrocities” committed by German critics against the Bible (p. 74).

With rather obvious relish, Moore, the historical pacifist, militantly attacks all “zealous defenders of biblical literalism” who indulged in “monkey business” in their “campaign against evolution in education” (p. 75). Our author is not at all reticent in his description of how “the agnostic lawyer, Clarence Darrow . . . swung with the spirit of the moment” during the famous Scopes Trial of 1925, “taking advantage of the popular impression that the Bible and evolution were on trial to land a crushing blow on the premier representative of the Fundamentalist opposition [William Jennings Bryan], “making him talk nonsense” and “confess ignorance.” Thus, “the Fundamentalists were reversed” and “the world could not stop laughing at their ignorance” (p. 76).

Professor Moore presumably finds it inexcusable for the “defenders of biblical literalism” to have taken seriously the biblical commands to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:7) or to have utilized “the divinely powerful” “weapons of our warfare . . . for the destruction of fortresses” (2 Cor. 10:4). On the other hand, the evolutionary scientist Maynard Shipley “is perhaps to be excused for not always writing dispassionately and for omitting sufficient documentation in his ‘short history of the Fundamentalist attacks on evolution and modernism’ ” (p. 75). Thus, while “‘the symbol of war . . . was an appealing one to the fundamentalist’ ” (p. 74, quoting Norman Furniss), “the military metaphor must be abandoned by those who wish to achieve historical understanding” (p. 76).

Does James R. Moore, then, approach the history of science and Christianity without any bias whatsoever? No, he honestly believes that “Darwinism was the legitimate offspring of an orthodox theology of nature and . . . that, ‘rightly

viewed,' orthodox theological bottles proved to have been made expressly for holding the new Darwinian wine," even though "to reason thus may well invite the accusation that one is doing scarcely veiled apologetics" (p. 16).

Our author's respect for Darwin — a respect that borders on reverence — is indeed "scarcely veiled." Darwin's "epoch-making discovery . . . made biological evolution for the first time scientifically cogent and theologically challenging" (p. 214). "Theory and prejudice were tempered with that caution which caused Darwin's scientific reputation to endure and with those noble virtues, comprised in the Golden Rule, which endeared his character to every race and class and nation" (p. 161; cf. p. 138).

"Face to face with a mountain or a coral reef, the biblical chronology seemed nonsense" to Darwin. For him, "gratuitous explanatory concepts, from catastrophes to archetypes" were simply "weak and beggarly elements" (p. 152). In fact, there was no ultimate *certainty* in the natural world, except for the certainty that there is no *fixity* of biological species (pp. 87, 115, 214-16). All is vague and in a state of flux. Moore is convinced that "it was these beliefs about certainty and fixity which were primarily overthrown" by Darwin (p. 15). As for the fundamentalists who held to the chronologies and concepts of Genesis out of a sense of loyalty to the Christ who endorsed Genesis, "never again" after the Scopes Trial of 1925 would they "make front page news across the nation" (p. 76). Thus, the only controversy that remains is "whether evolutionary theory demonstrates the need for a new religion to include the new idea of an evolving Universe or whether nothing more is needed than a transformed — or for the first time clearly understood — Christianity" (p. 16, quoting John Passmore).

Moore does admit, however, that Darwin's theory faced some very serious problems. "Above all, Darwin's theory of natural selection demanded a vast amount of time" (p. 133), but "time, as we shall see, was precisely what Darwin was denied" (p. 129). William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin), a brilliant English physicist and mathematician, showed that the earth could not be as old as evolution demanded (p. 134 — though Moore does not seem to realize that even radioactivity has not invalidated Kelvin's arguments). Darwin commented to a friend: "I am greatly troubled at the short duration of the world according to Sir W. Thomson, for I require for my theoretical views a very long period *before* the Cambrian formation" (p. 135).

Another problem was "missing links" in the fossil record. Speaking for Darwin, George Frederick Wright insisted, naively, that the geological record was "even in its best preserved sections, . . . poor and beggarly beyond description" (p. 288). Again, our author gives no evidence of comprehending the futility of such evolutionary rationalizations in the light of the obvious non-existence of whole chains of links — a fact increasingly recognized by leading paleontologists today.

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Darwin finally convinced himself that to believe in “miraculous creations” would make “my deity Natural Selection superfluous” (pp. 322, 344). But to say that “nature selects the fittest” is far from explaining where “the fittest” comes from. An obvious example of this is the fantastically complex human eye. Moore unforgivably dismisses the whole problem by saying that Darwin took this famous argument from design “as the *pièce de résistance* for an omnivorous natural selection” (p. 309; cf. p. 255).

A supreme tragedy — and absurdity — was Darwin’s conviction that his own brain derived ultimately “from unreasoning lower animals by fixed biological laws,” though this concept did give him, at least on one occasion, a “horrid doubt” concerning the validity of his own evolutionary reasonings (p. 321). Moore, of course, offers no solution to Darwin’s dilemma. Alfred Russel Wallace, who independently “discovered” the theory of organic evolution, profoundly disagreed with Darwin’s view that man differs from the animals only in degree, not in kind (pp. 184-90). Darwin’s answer, which Moore apparently shares, was that the evolution of humanity is analogous to the mystery of the development of the individual human soul (pp. 157, 280, 337, 347). Darwin, of course, could not have known even the outlines of the veritable mountain of scientific evidence against such a concept which is available today. But Professor Moore should know better.

The major portion of the volume provides a brilliant though biased analysis of the astounding variety of responses to Darwin on both sides of the Atlantic. Moore’s heroes, of course, turn out to be the “Christian Darwinists” (i.e. theistic evolutionists), such as James Iverach and Aubrey Lackington Moore in Great Britain (pp. 252-69) and Asa Gray and George Frederick Wright in America (pp. 269-98). The villains, somewhat surprisingly, include not only the “Christian anti-Darwinians” such as F.O. Morris, E.F. Burr, L.T. Townsend, C.R. Bree, T.R. Birks, G.T. Curtis, and especially Charles Hodge and J.W. Dawson (pp. 196-205), but also a wide spectrum of “liberal Darwinists” and “Neo-Lamarckians” including St. George Mivart, Frederick Temple, John Bascom, Joseph LeConte, Thomas MacQueary, Lyman Abbott, Francis Howe Johnson, George Matheson, Henry Ward Beecher, Minot Judson Savage, John Fiske, Henry Drummond, and especially the popular Herbert Spencer (pp. 153-73, 217-51, 304-7).

Somewhat beyond the comprehension of the present reviewer was Moore’s theological classification system. Christian anti-Darwinians such as Charles Hodge and John William Dawson are labeled as “semi-deists” (p. 339) because “they believed that God may ‘intervene’ in the course of nature” (p. 328). “‘*A theory of occasional intervention [namely, special creation] implies as its correlative a theory of ordinary absence*’ — a doctrine which ‘fitted in well with the Deism of the last century . . . Cataclysmal geology and special creation are the scientific analogue of Deism’ ” (p. 264, quoting with approval A.L. Moore [1843-90])

Our author creates even greater theological confusion when he asserts that Christian Anti-Darwinism, which involved an endorsement of the fixity of biological species (= “after its kind” in Genesis 1 and Leviticus 11), was “largely an amalgam of biblical literalism and Neo-Platonism” and “may thus in fact have had little to do with Christian doctrines” because it was conditioned by “philosophical assumptions with which the Christian faith has been allied” (p. 215; cf. p. 15). The biblical literalism of anti-Darwinism, contrary to Moore’s opinion, came from a consistent application of historical/grammatical hermeneutics to the text of Genesis as confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ, who referred to each of the first seven chapters of Genesis in a literal fashion, and by the NT writers, every one of whom referred to Genesis 1-11 in a literal fashion. Neo-Platonism has had no influence whatsoever in the consistently biblical interpretation of Genesis with regard to supernatural creation or other doctrines.

In complete contrast to the Christian Anti-Darwinians, “Christian Darwinism” is set forth as Christian, theistic, trinitarian, and Calvinistic! While acknowledging that Calvin himself was a strict creationist (p. 337), Moore nevertheless insists that it was “orthodox Calvinistic theology” which reconciled “providence and natural selection” and which demonstrated an ability “to reconcile ‘chance’ and providence, ‘second causes’ and a *prima causa omnium*,” making provision for “even those events which seemed independent of or irreconcilable with divine purposes” (p. 334). Thus, in total contradiction to biblical revelation concerning creation, sin, and the curse, to say nothing of the scientific impossibility of natural selection as a mechanism for macroevolutionism, Moore makes divine sovereignty do service for Darwinism. Though Darwin finally disowned theism, our author assures us that his great discovery was the ultimate fruit of “the ‘biblical’ or classical Christian conception of God as Creator,” which provided for “a free and perpetual Providence, the contingency of nature, and empirical methods in science,” mediated through such thinkers as Bacon, Boyle, and Newton, and, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, William Paley and Thomas Robert Malthus (pp. 327-28, 308-26). Our author never explains, however, why “strict creationists” (such as Calvin himself!) could not hold such theistic views, nor why they necessarily led to a concept of evolutionism through natural selection.

Nowhere, perhaps, is Moore’s theological incompetence more clearly displayed than in his effort to wed Christian trinitarianism to Darwinian evolutionism. Determined somehow to canonize Darwin as an unwitting apostle of the Church (who, “under the guise of a foe, did the work of a friend,” quoting A.L. Moore, p. 268), our author uses Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance (“perhaps the most influential general theory of attitude change” — p. 14) to show how beautifully “Anglo-Catholic theology and its doctrine of divine immanence . . . made its contribution to the reduction of dissonance between Darwinism and Christian beliefs” (p. 337).

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Somehow equating “God’s triune nature” with “divine immanence” — a colossal theological blunder — Moore suggests that the reconciliation of Christianity and Darwinism “comes in a fresh appreciation of God’s triune nature and a ‘fearless reassertion’ of ‘the old almost forgotten truth of the immanence of the Word, the belief in God as “Creation’s secret force.”’ No less a doctrine will accommodate both Darwinism and theistic belief” (p. 337, again quoting A.L. Moore). Those who are knowledgeable in the history of science and theology will surely be astounded to learn that Darwinism “has helped the Church to recover an understanding of God’s triune nature that was obfuscated by the deism of the Enlightenment” (p. 268).

“The great and learned Charles Hodge (1797-1878),” for over fifty years professor of exegetical, didactic, and polemical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, whose “three thousand former students carried forth his ‘Princeton Theology,’ the Calvinism of the Westminster divines . . . and the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture” (p. 203), certainly did not view Darwinism in that light! Toward the end of his life, in a carefully written analysis entitled, *What is Darwinism?*, Hodge concluded that it was another form of atheism, because it replaced God’s revelation in both Scripture and nature with human speculations (p. 204).

Although Moore politely dismisses Charles Hodge as “the last great representative of Calvinistic orthodoxy before the spread of the modern historical consciousness” (p. 204), he was far more than that. He was, in this reviewer’s opinion, the most discerning thinker among all the participants in “the post-Darwinian controversies” of the nineteenth century. He was anti-Darwinian simply because he saw, far more clearly than others in the vast spectrum of theological interaction with Darwin’s theories, that the deification of natural selection involved a destruction of both true science and true biblical Christianity. He would, perhaps, be even more horrified to read Moore’s conclusion that “Christian Darwinians were notably orthodox in their beliefs and that “it was their orthodox theology, in fact, which determined [!] that some Christians could become Darwinians” (p. 341).

Princeton University (then known as the College of New Jersey), the reviewer’s alma mater, mainly through the influence of Charles Hodge (who served as president of its board) remained “a thoroughly orthodox Presbyterian institution” in spite of the fact that James McCosh (1811-94) assumed the presidency in 1868 (pp. 245, 385 n. 81). McCosh was a strong Darwinian except on the question of human origins and “did not occupy his new post for a week before expressing to the upper classes of the College that he was fully in favour of evolution, provided that it was ‘properly limited and explained’ ” (p. 246).

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Ten years later, an even greater tragedy (in the reviewer's opinion) befell American Christianity: "After Hodge's death in 1878 his students and colleagues could safely entertain an evolutionary account of creation" (p. 241). One of his students, who had previously graduated from the College, was Joseph S. Van Dyke, author of a mild endorsement of Darwinism entitled, *Theism and Evolution* (1886). Sadly, Hodge's own son and successor as professor of theology at the Seminary, Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-86), "must be credited for placing his *imprimatur*, the honoured name of Hodge" upon this volume by writing its introduction. "Surely this, coming in the last year of his life, was a turning point for the acceptance of evolution among American Protestants" (pp. 242, 307).

Although many lesser voices continued to be raised against Darwinism (pp. 11, 93), including those of the greatly despised "Fundamentalists" of the 1920's (pp. 68-76), it is a solemn fact that by the time of the Darwin centennial of 1959, significant opposition to evolutionism had all but ended in the western world. If it had been written in the early 1960's and if its bizarre form of theistic evolutionism had not been included, Moore's book might have convinced many that Darwinism was here to stay.

But all this has changed. During the 1970's a veritable army of highly trained scientists, analogous to those who first opposed Darwin's theory (pp. 80-88), arose in Great Britain as well as in America to take a strong stand against the theological distortions of Genesis and the philosophic distortions of the fossil record, genetic and thermodynamic laws and astronomic evidence which have been perpetrated for over a hundred years in the name of evolutionism (see, e.g., Henry M. Morris, ed., *Scientific Creationism* [San Diego: Creation Life Publishers, 1974], and a partial listing of the writings of forty of the more prominent creation scientists of this generation in John C. Whitcomb and Donald B. DeYoung, *The Moon: Its Creation, Form, and Significance* [Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1978], pp. 166-69).

In conclusion, James R. Moore has devoted years of skillful efforts to create an ephemeral mirage: a non-biblical form of thesim wedded to an unscientific concept of life history on planet earth. He could therefore be the last great representative of theistic evolutionism before the rise of late twentieth century scientific creationism. The true Church of Jesus Christ still awaits a definitive work on the history of science and theology, utilizing valid historiographic methodology and style and saturated with the theological presuppositions of Christ and the apostles. May that day soon come!

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Religion, in our day, has accommodated itself to the doctrine of evolution, and has derived new arguments from it. We are told that "through the ages one increasing purpose runs," and that evolution is the unfolding of an idea which has been in the mind of God throughout. It appears that during those ages which so troubled Hugh Miller, when animals were torturing each other with ferocious horns and agonizing stings, Omnipotence was quietly waiting for the ultimate emergence of man, with his still more widely diffused cruelty. Why the Creator should have preferred to reach his goal by a process, instead of going straight to it, these modern theologians do not tell us. Nor do they say much to allay our doubts as to the gloriousness of the consummation.

Bertrand Russell
(Religion and Science)

"When I first came from Romania to England I thought it would be like coming from hell to heaven. I was coming from a place where the churches were being refined through suffering, yet they were packed, with hearts on fire for the Lord. I received the shock of my life when I saw churches in London almost empty From the turn of this century when 85% of the population every Sunday were in church, now only 5% attended. I came to the conclusion that there were two factors which destroyed Christianity in Western Europe. One was the theory of evolution, and the other liberal theology. Liberal theology is just evolution applied to the Bible and our faith".

Josif Ton, Romanian Pastor, exiled in the U.S.A.

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